CLAIMS

What we claim is:

1. An instant messaging communication system that enables a user to obtain instant messaging at destination devices other than the user's normal terminals, said system comprising

a presence processor,

a messenger client connected to said presence processor, and

a unified instant messaging processor communicating with said presence processor and with said user terminals, said unified instant message processor including

means for storing user defined terminal selections and for storing user preferences, and

a further processor connected to said storing means and comprising state reporting means for receiving from said unified instant message processor information as to the user defined local presence states and means for formatting and routing data in communication with said presence processor.

2. A system in accordance with claim 1 wherein said means for formatting and routing data comprises means for formatting and routing message data and means for formatting and routing presence data.

3. A system in accordance with claim 2 wherein said unified messaging processor further comprises a protocol interface between said further processor and said presence processor.

4. A system in accordance with claim 2 wherein communication between said unified messaging processor and said presence processor, between said messenger client and said presence processor, and between said user terminals and said unified instant messaging processor is via the internet.

5. An instant messaging communication system in accordance with claim 1 wherein said unified instant messaging processor is a central server for a plurality of users, each of said plurality of users having a plurality of different terminals.

6. A method for enabling instant messaging with a user at different locations for that user, said method including the steps of

transmitting data from a presence processor to a unified instant message processor,

at said unified instant message processor determining whether said data concerns a presence or a message,

based upon said determining step checking with prior stored information as to whether said data should be forwarded,

if said data is to be forwarded, checking prior stored information as to the local presence state for said data; and

formatting and routing said data to the intended terminal, as determined from said local presence state for said data.

7. The method in accordance with claim 6 further enabling a user to reply to a forwarded instant message and wherein said formatting and routing step comprises including within the forwarded message a specific return address including correlation information, and said method further comprising the steps of

monitoring said return address for a reply from the user terminal,

accepting the reply from a user terminal, correlating the reply with a proper instant messaging session, and translating the reply into a format acceptable to the presence processor, and

delivering the reply to the proper instant messaging session on the presence processor.

8. The method in accordance with claim 7 wherein communication between the unified instant message processor and a user terminal is via email.

9. The method in accordance with claim 8 wherein said unified instant message processor runs a Simple Mail Transport Protocol process and creates dynamic email addresses to do correlation.

10. The method in accordance with claim 6 further comprising the step of registering with the presence processor on behalf of a user.

11. The method in accordance with claim 10 wherein said registering step comprises the steps of

the unified instant message processor prompting the user for a local state,

the unified instant message processor reporting the user global state to the presence processor, and

the presence processor delivering to the unified instant messaging processor status information for buddies of the user.